

THE GOSPEL OF

JOHN

One More
Thing...

INTRODUCTION

John 21:20-25

“One more thing . . .”

If you are of a certain age, you hear Peter Faulk’s Columbo in your head and see his signature disheveled hair and coat, his ever-present cigar. If you are a fan of Apple, you no doubt hear Steve Jobs’ voice and see the twinkle in his eye as he announces the latest revolutionary release that will change everything.

In either case, what seems like an afterthought turns out to be a crucial bit of information. If chapter 21 is the “one more thing . . .” of John’s Gospel, the last five verses are the “one more thing” to the “one more thing.” John 20:30 would have been a good ending. Chapter 21 is the Epilogue, the final conclusion, that hints at something more, a continuation of the story after the writer puts down his pen.

In our fast paced world it is tempting to overlook the Epilogue, to think that all of the action is complete and we don’t really need this part. After all, John has already told us why he wrote. We have seen the life and ministry, the death and resurrection, even the appearances to the disciples and the restoration of Peter. What more is there to say? And to be honest, it feels a bit tacked on. “One more thing . . .” in this case is really two things that aren’t really related and probably aren’t crucial.

Until we look a little closer. Marvel movies have become famous for their “end credits scenes”, which are just a clever way to do an Epilogue, to get you primed for the next movie. While Marvel does it to ensure more ticket sales, John does it for a far more important reason. He is setting us up for our part in the ongoing story of Jesus.

OPEN IT

1. What is your favorite “One more thing moment . . .”, why?

READ IT

John 21:20-25

EXPLORE IT

2. **What is Peter concerned about? (v. 20-21)**
3. **In your own words, what is Jesus saying to Peter? (v. 22)**
4. **What is the rumor? (v. 23)**
5. **What is the job of the disciple Peter asks about? (v. 24)**

APPLY IT

In the previous five verses, John recounts the restoration of Peter, his commissioning to feed or pastor Jesus' sheep (the Church), and finally gives a prophecy regarding his death. "Stretch out your hands" meant that he would be crucified, just as he predicted in 13:36. Now Peter turns and sees John. Apparently, Jesus and Peter had been walking along the beach having their conversation and John was following a short distance behind (v. 20). Peter wants to know "what about him?" what is his job, what will be his death?

In this scene, John identifies himself by the question Peter told him to ask at the Last Supper. That scene had shown both John's close connection to Jesus as well as Peter's connection to him. Peter and John seem quite close in all of the Gospels. They were business partners in a fishing enterprise before following Jesus and seem to be again, and along with John's brother James they seem to function as sort of an inner circle among Jesus' disciples (see Mark 5:36 where Jesus only brings these three when he raises the daughter of Jairus and 9:2-13 where they witness the transfiguration), so the fact that they are together for this intimate conversation and that Peter would immediately ask about John is perhaps not surprising.

6. **Do you think that Peter is asking the question about John a) because of their friendship and his desire for John's best, b) because he just needs to know, or c) because he is comparing himself and wants to make sure his mission and fate are at least as good as John's? Why do you think that?**

Most commentators seem to think that Peter is comparing himself to John to see if he measures up. Grant Osborne says, “When we face difficult experiences, we often look to someone for whom everything seems to be going more smoothly and ask a question like Peter’s.”¹ Chuck Swindoll adds, “Personal failure usually leads to comparisons. We either push others down to feel less inferior, or we allow shame to bury us at the bottom of the world. Neither response is from God.”²

7. Do Osborne and Swindoll’s take on our tendency to compare ourselves to others ring true to you? Why or why not?

8. Are you more inclined to push others down or yourself in these situations? What do you do to avoid these destructive reactions?

¹ Osborne, Grant R., *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary Vol. 13*, (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2007), P. 302

² Swindoll, Charles R., *Insights on John: Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary, Vol. 4*, (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2014), p. 398

9. Jesus in effect says “Mind your own business Peter” in verse 22. Why do you think we have such a hard time doing that? How important is it for us to remember that we are not to compare ourselves to either the calling or circumstances of other’s lives?

10. Jesus’ second admonition to Peter to follow him is emphatic: “As for you, follow me!” What does the command to “follow” teach us about the nature of Christian belief and practice?

Jesus told Peter that his calling was to shepherd or pastor the Church. Peter would become *the* early leader in the Church in Jerusalem (Acts), and later Paul would describe him as the premier apostle to the Jews (Gal. 2:8). First Peter indicates some connection to the Churches in what is now northern Turkey and Church tradition says that he ministered in Rome (see 1 Pt. 5:13 where “she who is in Babylon” seems to refer to the Church in Rome) and was martyred there during Nero’s persecution. Some later traditions say that Peter requested to be crucified upside down because he was unworthy to die in the same way as his Lord, though this is likely an added legend.

John is almost always shown with Peter in Acts. Peter is the lead and John is the support. Much later, John would write his Gospel while he lived in Ephesus (so writes Eusebius in *Church History* around 125 AD) as well as four other letters. His later years are hard to pin down, but he was clearly exiled to Patmos (an island off the west coast of Turkey about 60 miles from Ephesus), at some point where he wrote the book of Revelation (Rev. 1:9). There is a strong tradition that John brought Mary, Jesus’ mother, with him to care for as Jesus commanded him.

Both Peter and James had important roles and ministries in the early Church, but those roles were quite different even while greatly connected. Peter was a trailblazer and outspoken leader. John was seemingly more introspective and as v. 24 indicates, destined to be a witness to the life of Jesus by writing a Gospel. Peter did write two letters, but no Gospel (though it is likely that Mark’s material comes from Peter’s recollections). Peter would die in 64 AD, John around 100 AD.

11. What do the different ministries of Peter and John teach us about the roles that Jesus might give us?

12. Why do you think John included both the rumor about him not dying and its correction?

13. How can we, like John, make sure that false rumors do not become a problem for people who are otherwise godly Christians?

The fact that John's Gospel is written much later, when he is likely the last living member of the twelve, means that Peter is long dead when he writes and that he has endured a different kind of hardship—he is alone. Not entirely of course, there will be new friends, coworkers, and even disciples, but none who went through all that he did, none as close as Peter or his brother who was the first of the twelve to die (Acts 12:1-2).

Someone other than John, quite possibly the elders of the Church at Ephesus, wrote verse 24 (unless John is using the royal "we" which is possible though not likely). This is not unknown in Scripture. For instance, Deuteronomy 34 refers to the death and burial of Moses, so clearly he could not have written that even though he wrote the rest of the book.

14. How could John's fate be as difficult, though different, from Peter's?

15. How does the trustworthiness of John speak to his role as compared to Peter's role as Shepherd?

16. John makes it clear that he has not even attempted to write down all that Jesus did (v.25). As you look back over the Gospel of John and all that we have seen, what sticks out to you most? What has impacted your understanding of Jesus?

17. Do you think that John's statement "I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" is hyperbole to prove a point or is it literal?

18. This epilogue leaves out the ascension of Jesus but points to an ongoing future and ministry for the disciples and, by extension, us. How does that fact encourage you today?

19. John paints a portrait of Jesus that is both different from the other Gospel writers and at the same time meshes completely with them, providing complimentary information. It is both easy to understand and incredibly deep. At the end though, Jesus calls us to follow him regardless of anyone else. Peter would be a martyr, John the longest surviving original witness. What is he calling you to today?